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the Italian cottage. Let it not be thought that we are wasting time in the contemplation of its beauties; even though they are of a kind which the architect can never imitate, because he has no command over time, and no choice of situation; and which he ought not to imitate, if he could, because they are only locally desirable or admirable. Our object, let it always be remembered, is not the attainment of architectural data, but the formation of taste.

October 12, 1837.

#### OUR COINAGE.

The coinage of a country, while it may be considered as illustrative of its institutions, advance in civilization, and progress in the fine Arts, may be made useful in strengthening its character, and cultivating its taste. Leaving to the learned in such matters, an exposition of the historical use of coins, I would call the attention of the people to the fact, that large sums of money have been spent upon our coinage, without any adequate result; and that our gold, silver, and copper, instead of being examples of the artistic ability of the country, are far below the requirements of public taste. Science and the mechanic arts are called upon to furnish the basis of an excellent coinage, and they perform their work faithfully, but that which gives dignity and beauty, that which distinguishes the civilized from the barbarous is utterly wanting. The devices upon our coins are incoherent, unmeaning, monstrous; responding to no idea of the people, whose servants utter them; unworthy to compete in execution with the buttons on foreign liveries. After losing sight, for some years, of the United States coin, my eyes having been accustomed to the delicately-cut European currency, and wishing to procure American gold in Havre, I hesitated accepting it at the hands of a respectable banker, its clumsy execution giving it so strongly the appearance of a barefaced counterfeit. I found it was good gold, only spoiled in appearance. It is unnecessary to waste much criticism upon the "fowl of freedom," as he now appears upon our coins. This bastard offspring of heraldry, rejoicing in his unnatural ugliness, is so far removed from nature, that he needs a label quite as much as the figure of Liberty, which is furnished with one. He seems to have been nailed up as his kinsman the hawk is sometimes served, and in like manner to have suffered the vicissitudes of wind and rain.

But the Liberty! Involuntarily we exclaim with the noble Frenchwoman, "Oh, Liberty! how many atrocities are perpetrated in thy name!" Her millions of effigies are scattered among our people, to the utter confusion of every American idea of the word. *This* is a Liberty that would rejoice tyrants. Her dislocated limbs indicate weakness, her timid attitude expresses fear, for she is looking hurriedly over her shoulder in manifest alarm. In her left hand she holds a staff; would it were a distaff, to give some hint at independence, instead of supporting a cap, which seems ready for use in begging. I think we should call this cap, the office cap. The shield, which serves as an ostentatious label, is also useful to hide her means of support; perhaps the office cap is deemed sufficient. Her feet are completely enveloped in drapery, and perhaps

this is better; since, if little drapery covers a multitude of sins, what might be done with a great deal. We will pass by the shapeless and ill-matched arms, and the melancholy length of legs, confident that the reader will agree with us, that this figure is a shameful caricature of a most noble subject. Is this the best thing that we can show upon our coins, as the result of the last twenty years' progress? Is this the artistic language by which we would have foreign nations respect our institutions, or posterity measure our refinement? So it will be, and while we write this protest against the indecent neglect, while California is yet uncoined, and our currency in its youth, this same system will continue. It will be found that nobody is responsible, nobody to blame, that money will do its work just as well with one device as another, and so the matter will end. It may be otherwise; it may be that a true view of the subject will come home to somebody who has influence somewhere; that the person somewhere will stir up somebody else, to try to do something about it; and if the person represented as somebody else, does try, and succeeds, and if he is a capable man, he will merit, and I doubt not receive, the thanks of all persons of sense as well as taste, of the present and future generations.

G.

#### LETTERS FROM ITALY—No. III.

FLORENCE, August 10, 1854.

DEAR PAULINA:—The ideas which I endeavored to express to you in my last letter, in relation to the early Christian Art, were suggested by a certain picture, painted by the Fra Angelico, of whom mention was made, as representing that Art in its purity, which picture is hung upon the wall opposite our corridor window, chosen to illumine my page this lovely summer morning. I have reserved this painting to be the last object in this long outer hall, of which to write, although it is one of the first in point of locality, and must be passed by all who visit the galleries, and for this reason—few love it. Yonder painter—he with the Titian-like head, who copies Titian, and is even now making a reduced copy of the wonderful Venus, and what is truly rare, who *can* do it, and he alone of all the multitude of artists who throng the galleries of Italy, *he* smiled a smile of gentle pity when I spoke to him of the Angels by Fra Angelico.

He thought I loved Art, that I had a soul that recognized the fine, subtle mystery, the marvellous significance of *color*. He thought I was one of the few privileged, blessed ones, permitted to ascend to the higher circle, the celestial plane. "The holy city! Not in form shall lie its glory—not in form, but in the purity, in the inconceivable magnificence of *color*. Oh! it was a prophecy—an inspiration—the voice of God, revealing to us, through the medium of one of the most exquisite organizations the world has ever known, that prophet of Patmos, the nature of angelic worlds, and lo! above all, the gates of pearl, the golden streets, the walls of precious stones, filling the heavens with colors too gorgeous for mortal vision. Ah, see! for us, the pearly lights, the gold, and the carnations! See the inward gleaming blue of human eyes, like the light of gems! Mark the broad splendor of yonder drapery, and note the exquisite *quality* of all the hues," and he gazed steadfastly, with half averted head, upon the matchless work of the Venetian, unmindful of the surrounding throng, and forgetful of him whose love of the unskilled Angelico, had suggested his "rapture." I felt that it was true, this estimate of the effect of light. Color was to me a perpetual

joy, at all times, everywhere; I felt its full significance, it was to my eye what music was to my ear; I believed, and still believe, that no single influence acting upon the spirit through the senses, has the power that hues and tones have. So sensitive had I become to their influence that the great stained window back of the altar in Santa Maria Novella was within me, a power identical with that of a most glorious anthem, or the pealing of bells. Flowers reached the same cord which vibrated beneath the touch of a bird-note, and I believe that the poetical association of the rose-tone and the nightingale-tone had its foundation in the profoundest depths of the human soul. Here also I recall a fancy, it may seem, but one which fills me with happiness, and one, moreover, that the developed soul will find a large truth, I doubt not. Let one who is susceptible to the influence of light and color, gaze into the depths of summer sky at night, when the whole dome above him is filled with violet-hued light, and gemmed over with stars infinitely varied in their tints, yet all toned to the finest harmony, and he will experience two sensations, equally rapturous, one of which he will trace to the immeasurable beauty of colors acting upon him, and the other beyond that, as the stars are beyond the violet sky, he will recognize, or imagine perhaps, to be the effect of sweet sounds, inaudible to sense, yet, nevertheless received, and answered too, by the finer spirit within, and through which he comprehends the significance of the prophet's words, "The stars sang together."

How then, in view of this feeling for color, could I love a work of Art, wherein, when I saw as an artist, I found no truth of coloring, indeed, found all the precious principles of light and shade, of tone and time, neglected, nay, violated.

In order to answer this question which daily arose, especially after my interview with my Titian-like friend, I have waited, and, notwithstanding my questionings and the sneers of my fellow students, kept my love for the saints and young angels of the artist monk of Fiesole, through all, direct and deep; and I am now convinced that the power exerted by these creations of his hand over those who revere truth, as well as love the symbols of truth, in spite of such enormous defects as false drawing and false coloring, proves that in some other respect they must conform most exquisitely to the laws, the deep vital principles of Art. The color of yonder angel's face, the one with the golden trumpet, does not present itself as color; I see only the ineffable glory of the countenance. It comes as beauty and purity immaterialized, and my soul entertains it as a guest whose footsteps shook not the threshold of sense.

The rich golds and carnations, made richer by the water-hues of the Lagunes, which Titian and Giorgione gathered from the gleaming arms and cheeks of Venetian maids, would find no place upon *that* form, *those* features; for color is related to emotion, to passion, and that by fixed laws, just as difficult to comprehend as is the emotional nature of man. The coloring of the Venus of the Tribune would be more false, were it transferred to this angel's head, than these feeble tints from the palette of the monk. Were it thus I should no longer be unconscious of the art employed; the exquisite flesh tints would assert themselves, as such, and the unrivalled spiritual beauty of the painting would be marred. With the Venus it is otherwise. *There* the tones harmonize completely with the best thought, the highest ideal of the subject. The colors spread upon the canvass in such rich profusion, upon drapery, jewels and flowers, are as so many sweet sounds brought into perfect accord with the principal note, strengthening and confirming *that* in its expression of the splendid theme; hence through this truly wonderful harmony the painting justly takes its place at the head of the department of color in Art. But with these faces of saints, such harmony is be-

yond the domain of pigments, and can only be achieved in the clear regions of an undefiled imagination.

I am now content to sit for an hour each morning, near this morning-glory of Art. I feel stronger and clearer for the day. The hour is like a season of earnest communion with one's self with one's interior life, like the singing of morning songs.

I come to the galleries early, the floors have been swept, the window shades arranged with reference to the eastern light, the "Custodes" walk leisurely along the silent corridor, and at intervals footsteps upon the stone stairs announce the arrival of artists, who are engaged in copying—a strange company of "seekers," gathered from the far corners of the earth. The youth yonder with the fine cold face, who pauses in his slow walk, as he finds himself opposite the Venus de Medici, is a Greek and an Athenian, the lady near him is a Russian, and he who hurries past is an American; the old man with the snow-white hair and the pale placid face is a copyist in miniature, a native of Florence, who has spent his whole life in the galleries, copying the same pictures from early boyhood; this is all the world he is conscious of, these cities, countries, and seas, are the only ones over which he has travelled, these forms his only companions, among whom are his friends, true and tried. Father, mother, brothers and sisters were shadows, and *they* vanished long ago; throngs of phantoms have filled the rooms, have been grouped, seeming like pictures, and have disappeared. *His* companions are not thus fleeting. He sits apart, his soul calmed and blessed in the assurance of the immutability of all he loves; they gaze upon him alone, and that smile of ineffable sweetness is the same holy blessing now, as when it beamed upon him in his youth, from the lips of the saintly maiden above him. He never passes this old picture of Fra Angelico's without feeling its beauty, and his expression of peace, "peace which passeth all understanding," is beyond description. I touch him lightly upon the arm, he steps back and we stand together by the window; the sympathy of the simple-hearted old man is very pleasant to me. The morning light illumines the gold back-ground of the picture, and glances back from the gilded wings and burnished instruments of the heavenly choir. The large Madonna in the centre, although serene and beautiful, was too large for the pencil of the artist, whose hand had been educated in the school of the missal illuminators, but surrounding that is a margin, where are painted the band of angels. We looked upon those unspeakably lovely faces in silence, as I always do, and thought of him who refused all worldly honors for the love of an art, through which alone he could make known his views of the after life, and of the blissful state of the redeemed and sanctified in the mansions prepared for them—the humble cloistered worker, to whom that "Art was henceforth a hymn of praise." No embroidered robes for him, no mitre, no crown.

"He never began a picture without prayer," a fact which reveals to us another fact; he was earnest and reverent, and, smile as we may at the simplicity of the monk who could not "sketch in" a picture without prayer, *without* those qualities of earnestness and reverence, indicated by such a proceeding, no artist ever can achieve the immortal. The only entrance to Michael Angelo's studio was through his chapel.

But my morning hour has passed, the old man steals silently away to his picture, and the visitors begin to crowd the halls and corridors. You will pardon me for lingering thus, far back, beyond what we look upon as the summer of Art, when such men as Michael Angelo, Da Vinci, and Raphael walked these streets, for although love detained me, and beauty rewarded my devotion, another power aside from that

would have held me to a brief communion with those evangelists of art, a power, which without love would have been duty, inasmuch as the great masters *cannot* be understood without some knowledge of those who were *their* masters. To one that knows nothing of Perugino, nor of Massacio, Raphael is an unaccountable phenomenon, but *they* explain *him*, as Massacio is himself explained, by Ghiberti, and his wonderful bronze gates. It is better that these divine men should be viewed in the light of the truth *they* saw and profited by. Better that we should see that the footsteps which bore them to that heavenly height, were made upon the earth, along which the humblest pilgrim may tread. Nor were they ashamed to own their indebtedness to those who had walked before them. "Behold my master!" said the stern old sculptor of the "Day" and "Night," as he pointed to the colossal fragment of Hercules in the Vatican.

"I thank God that I have seen Michael Angelo!" said the divine Raphael.

Is it a wonder that these men became God-like?

But the studio calls me from the gallery, and the pen must be exchanged for the pencil.

ADIO.

ASSYRIAN SCULPTURES.—Nimroud is the name of the ruins upon the Tigris, a few miles below Mosul, where these remarkable relics were discovered in 1846 and 1847 by Mr. Layard. Few can be more impressed with the importance of these sculptures than one who, like myself, is in the habit of lecturing upon the general history of Art, and who, up to the period of the discoveries by M. Botta near Khorsabad, and of those by Mr. Layard, had been restricted to the small cylinder as the only specimen of Assyrian-Babylonian sculpture. The moral element of these sculptures may be at once defined as the glorification of power, bravery, and the dignity of man, as exemplified in the one ruler to whom all the other figures, each sufficiently powerful in himself, are subservient. Every detail combines to assist this impression: the peculiar type, variously modified, it is true, of the heads, with the piercing expression of the large deep-set eye—the aquiline and very prominent nose—the protruding lips—the strongly projecting chin, generally adorned with a dignified and carefully kept beard—all exhibit the character of a proud, firm, indomitable energy; while the general broad proportions, the exaggerated marking of the muscles, the inordinate strength of the arms (in which the power to seize and to hold are perfectly embodied), is found to correspond strictly with the expression of the head. Symbolism also has been made use of to increase the appearance of strength in the person of the ruler by attaching four bull's horns to his head-gear. The same intention is also still more evident in the frequently recurring colossal ox, and in the rarer figure of the lion, both represented with human heads of great dignity. This latter may be considered as the artistic realization of the surname "Man-lion," so frequently given to the heroes of Oriental song. The subjects also have all the same intention—the glorification of the strength of man, and above all that of the one ruler: successful battles—sieges—lion and stag hunts—in two sculptures at Paris, the strangling even of lions by the hands of the ruler himself, with representations of every kind of homage paid to him.

On the other hand, the religious element in the simple forms of the Assyrian worship is far less conspicuous here than in Indian and Egyptian monuments. The same may be said in a still greater degree of the feminine element. The seclusion of the women was according to strict Oriental custom. They are therefore seldom seen in these sculptures, and then only in subordinate relations—such as in the attitude of entreaty at sieges, in a conquered town, &c.

We must next analyse the nature of these sculptures as works of Art. In this sense they may be said to assume in some respects a very high, and in others an equally low position. The laws of plastic Art are admirably observed, both in the reliefs of various depths, of which the majority of these sculptures consist, and in the few specimens of sculpture in the round. The action expresses what is intended; the execution is sharp, clean, and often very careful: on the other hand, no knowledge of the human form is apparent; the proportions are generally arbitrary; the indications of the single and strongly pronounced muscles are, with few exceptions, given with the coarsest and most barbarous conventionality, especially in the legs, which, even when the upper part of the body fronts the spectator, are always represented in profile; the eyes, as with the Egyptians, are invariably in a front view; and the heads are destitute of all intellectual expression. The garments, with which, according to Oriental custom, most of the figures are amply draped, exclude, equally by their shape and by the thickness of material imitated, all indication of organic form. The figures of animals, however, are far more true to nature—horses, mules, and lions are frequently admirably formed and generally of very animated action; the only conventionality is in the treatment of the hair. Objects of architecture, utensils, trappings of horses, &c., are very perfectly rendered, frequently with good taste, though as frequently overlaid. To judge from the great artificial luxury which these latter objects display, and from the mechanical repetition of the conventional forms already described, it may be inferred that these sculptures, which must have taken an immense amount of power to execute, belong to the most flourishing period of the earlier Assyrian kingdom, from the time of Phal to that of Salmassar, from the year 760 to 730 before Christ. It is to be hoped that the deciphering of the numerous cuneiform inscriptions, in which the well-known Major Rawlinson is now engaged, will shortly throw light on this important question of date. The sculptures are in admirable preservation, which is the more surprising as they are almost exclusively composed of a soft gypseous stone. By means of these remains not only has a large gap in the history of Art been filled up, but the history of the world itself has gained a certain completeness with regard to facts on which all written sources of information were deficient; and a people and its ruler, with their character, their habits, and their costume, their relations in war and peace, are now presented clearly to our sight.—*Dr. Waagen.*

PARIS UNIVERSAL EXHIBITION.—Artists desiring to exhibit in the Exhibition of Works of Fine Arts and Industry, at Paris, next spring, are required to send in their works between this and the 15th of March, the galleries being now open for their reception; such works to be accompanied by the exhibitor's name, place of birth, and present address. The Lords of the Committee of Privy Council, in order to ensure the due representation of the art of painting in this country, have directed Captain Owen, R.E., to address the owners of private collections on the subject, and we hear that Lord Overstone, Mr. Sheepshanks, Mr. Thomas Baring, and some others, have already intimated their willingness to entrust to Her Majesty's Government those works in their collections which must be suggested by their respective artists.—*Artist.*

THE Sultan has always shown much interest in the Arts, and encouraged and recompensed artists; he has lately conferred upon M. Sebouh Manasse, painter to the imperial court, the order of *Medjidie* of the fifth class. This artist is at present attached, in the capacity of chief dragoman, to the Imperial Embassy at Paris, and has received orders to occupy himself with several miniatures for the Sultan.—*Ibid.*